PRELUDE TO

INFINITY

MARVEL NOW!

AR

HICKMAN
SPENCER
CASELLI
MARTIN

016

PREVIOUSLY IN AVENGERS

IT NEVER ENDS UNTIL IT HAS TO END, AND THEN TOO LATE TO BEGIN. NOW IS A TIME FOR BEGINNINGS, AND SO WE HAVE TO START--AND THE START IS WHAT HAPPENS BEFORE OUR VERY END.

THIS IS WHERE THE END BEGINS.

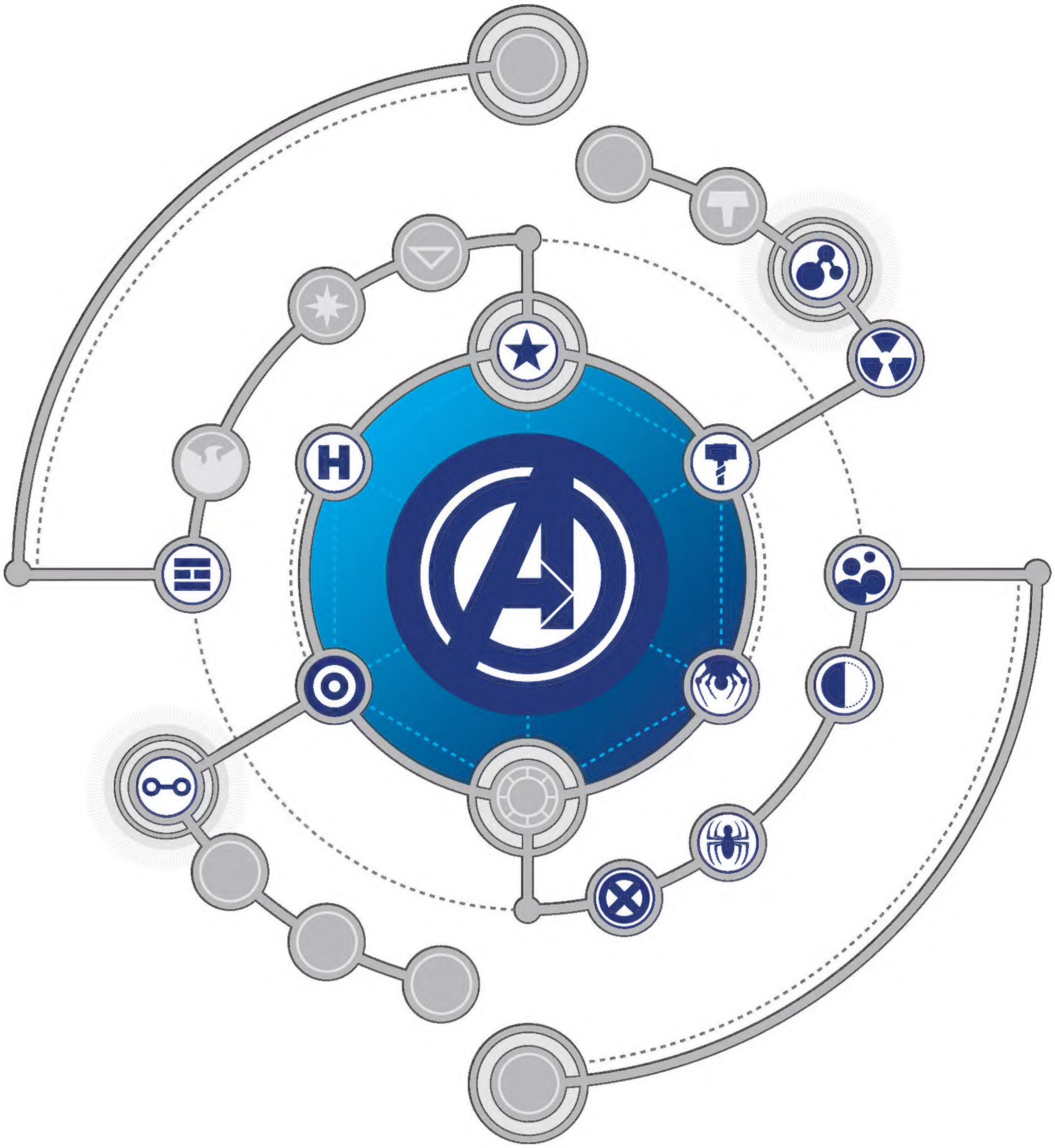
OH, MAN.

OKAY, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WE HAVE SOLVED THE FIRST PROBLEM. WE HAVE LOCATED THE ORIGIN OF THE SIGNAL RESPONSIBLE FOR WREAKING GLOBAL HAVOC AND THE LOSS OF COUNTLESS LIVES.

"NOW WE NEED TO START ASKING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE SIGNAL ITSELF. THE WHY OF IT.

"IT MAY NOT MATTER WHAT THESE THINGS ARE SAYING...

"...SO MUCH AS WHO THEY'RE SAYING IT TO."



EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES

CAPTAIN AMERICA · IRON MAN · THOR · HAWKEYE · BLACK WIDOW · HULK
WOLVERINE · SPIDER-MAN · CAPTAIN MARVEL · SPIDER-WOMAN
FALCON · SHANG-CHI · SUNSPOT · CANNONBALL · MANIFOLD
SMASHER · CAPTAIN UNIVERSE · HYPERION

"TO THE END"

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THE SUN.
WEEKS AGO.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

NOTHING, JUST--JUST DRAWING.

HAVE YOU ALWAYS BEEN ABLE TO DO THAT, KEVIN, OR IS THIS NEW?

IT'S NEW. LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE IN MY LIFE.

I CAUGHT MYSELF WATCHING THE SUN YESTERDAY. I COULD SEE THE HYDROGEN ATOMS FUSING TOGETHER.

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME, ADAM?

AR

YOU ARE BECOMING THE STARBRAND.

THE CHANGE IN YOUR BODY WAS INSTANTANEOUS...AND NECESSARY. A CONDUIT MUST BE ABLE TO HANDLE ITS RELATIVE CHARGE.

REWORKING THE MIND...TAKES LONGER.

IT'S A MUCH MORE SUBTLE THING. EXPANSIVE IN WAYS YOU MIGHT NOT NOTICE.

WOULD YOU LIKE FOR ME TO DEMONSTRATE?

SURE.

TELL ME HOW MANY SENTIENT CREATURES ARE LOCATED WITHIN A 5000 METER RADIUS WITH YOU BEING THE CENTER POINT.

HOW COULD I POSSIBLY... WAIT...WAIT...

INCLUDING YOU AND I, THERE ARE 117. 119 IF YOU EXTRAPOLATE OUT THE GESTATION PERIOD OF TWO OF THE FERTILIZED WORKERS.

THE FACILITY'S A.I. WILL ALSO ACHIEVE SENTIENCE IN ROUGHLY THREE THOUSAND, TWO HUNDRED HOURS. THERE IS A SEVENTEEN PERCENT CHANCE THAT IT WILL BE SUICIDAL.

HOW THE HELL DID I JUST DO THAT?

YOU ARE THE STARBRAND.

SHALL WE CONTINUE?

GALADOR.

MY CHILDREN.

MY LOST LITTLE CHILDREN...

HOW DID YOU STRAY SO FAR?

YOU SHOULD GO NOW, MANIFOLD.

THIS IS NO PLACE FOR YOU TO BE.

OH...I GET IT. YOU BROUGHT ME HERE JUST TO SEE THIS, DIDN'T YOU?

THE OTHERS WON'T HEAR IT COMING FROM ME, BUT THEY WILL LISTEN TO YOU--THEY CONFUSE DAMAGED WITH DELUSIONAL.

NEXT TIME, I WANT YOU TO WEAR YOUR COAT.

I'LL TRY TO REMEMBER THAT.

THIS IS GOING TO BE BAD, ISN'T IT?

BEYOND YOUR COMPREHENSION, EDEN.

GO BACK AND TELL THE AVENGERS--THEY HAVE NOT DONE ENOUGH. THE MACHINE IS NOT COMPLETE.

TO PROTECT A WORLD YOU MUST POSSESS THE POWER TO DESTROY A WORLD.

GO NOW-- USE WORDS THEY WILL UNDERSTAND...

THEY HAVE TO GET BIGGER.

EARTH.

"THE ORGANISM--WHATEVER IT IS--EMERGED FROM A LEVEL 5 LAB ON A.I.M. ISLAND AT ROUGHLY THE SAME TIME THE SIGNAL IN PERTH WENT ACTIVE.

"SATELLITES SHOW SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE TO THE ISLAND, WHICH THE ORGANISM LEFT AT SUPERSONIC SPEEDS..."

...HEADED TOWARDS YOU.

WE CAN PROBABLY SAFELY ASSUME HE'S RESPONDING TO THE SAME OUTGOING CALL AS YOUR ROCK FRIENDS. PROBLEM IS, BASED ON THE READING THIS THING IS GIVING OFF, THE THREAT IS CONSIDERABLY GREATER HERE.

I DON'T FEEL GOOD ABOUT THIS, IS WHAT I'M SAYING, CAPTAIN. SOMETHING FEELS WRONG.

RIGHT--WE GOT AN E.T.A. HERE, DOCTOR BANNER?

HE'S-- HE'S ON TOP OF YOU NOW, CAP.

ALL RIGHT, PEOPLE, LOOK ALIVE, THIS ISN'T OVER--WE'VE GOT INCOMING!

AR

OH, MAN...

BA-BOOOOM

SYSTEM QUERY: USER?
SYSTEM STATUS: USER: OFFLINE.

SYSTEM STATUS: COMMUNICATION: OFFLINE.

SYSTEM STATUS: UNDETERMINED.

S.H.I.E.L.D. OBSERVATION STATION:
THE HUB.

DOCTOR BANNER--WE'VE LOST VISUAL--

YES, I KNOW, I KNOW...

ARE THEY--?

I DON'T KNOW...JUST... GIVE ME A MOMENT...

YES, SIR-- ATTEMPTING TO RECONFIGURE. BUT WE *NEED* YOU TO--

NOT SURE IF THAT'S THE BEST COURSE AT THE PRESENT...

WORK AROUND DID IT--WE'RE COMING BACK ONLINE...

GOOD-- KEEP IT TOGETHER, DOCTOR...

SIR-- WE HAVE-- WE HAVE--

I-- I SEE IT--

OH HELL.

I AM NOT HERE... I AM STANDING IN A MEADOW...SURROUNDED BY NOTHING BUT PEACEFUL...

SIR, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? THE ORGANISM APPEARS TO BE RECHARGING... WHAT SHOULD WE *DO?*

RUN.

UHNN... WHAT THE DEVIL WAS THAT?

KAFF! SOMETHING WE WEREN'T READY FOR. EVERYONE STILL WITH US?

UP YOU GO, 'BERTO.

YOU KNOW, WE COULD BE AT THE BEACH, SAM.

LITTLE DRINKS, NAPS...

JUST BE GLAD WE'RE STILL BREATHING, KID. COUNT YOURSELF LUCKY.

LUCK HAS NO PART IN THIS. IT LEFT US ALIVE FOR A REASON.

IT'S PLAYING WITH US...

IT CRAVES BATTLE.

THEN WE GIVE IT WHAT IT WANTS.

YOU KNOW THE DRILL, PEOPLE...

SYSTEM STATUS: PRESERVE USER.

AVENGERS ASSEMBLE!

THE SUN.
ONE WEEK AGO.

THIS CONSTRUCT THAT SURROUNDS US IS POWERED BY THE LOCAL G-TYPE STAR. IT IS A PARTIALLY FUNCTIONAL STELLAR ARRAY--CALLED A DYSON SPHERE BY YOUR PEOPLE.

TELL ME WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT IT.

OKAY...

IT'S FASCINATING... I HAVE MORE CONTROL NOW, LIKE FINE MOTOR SKILLS. I CAN READ THE PATTERN OF THE ENERGY. SEE HOW IT FLOWS, IMPLYING A SHAPE.

THERE ARE FORTY-SEVEN COMPLETED SECTIONS...PRODUCING SOMEWHERE AROUND...OH!

OH, INDEED.

TELL ME WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED.

THIS PLACE DOES NOT CURRENTLY GENERATE ENOUGH ENERGY TO HOLD ME...THEY ONLY THINK IT CAN.

YES. IN FACT, THIS PLACE CANNOT HOLD EITHER OF US--IT NEVER COULD. WATCH...

THIS IS A VIEW OF A PLANET STILL ACCESSIBLE THROUGH THE COLLAPSING SUPERFLOW. THIS METHOD OF TRANSIT WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE IN THE NEAR FUTURE, BUT FOR NOW IT REMAINS AT OUR DISPOSAL.

AT ANY TIME, WE COULD HAVE LEFT THIS PLACE BEHIND.

THE LESSON HERE IS YOU ARE NO LONGER A MAN. MEN HAVE MANY LIMITS...YOU HAVE VERY FEW.

IF WE CAN BREAK OUT OF HERE, WHY DON'T WE? SERIOUSLY, THE SPHERE SUCKS.

WE CAN LEAVE WHEN YOU HAVE FULL CONTROL OF YOUR POWERS--WHEN YOU ARE READY.

ARE YOU READY, KEVIN?

NO.

THEN WE CONTINUE.

WHAT ARE THE THREE MOST DESTRUCTIVE YIELDS WHEN FUSING STRANGE MATTER?

PERTH.

SYSTEM STATUS: ENGAGED.

SYSTEM TARGET: ENHANCED.
SYSTEM STATUS: UPGRADE.

BOOM

SYSTEM QUERY: USER?
SYSTEM STATUS: USER: ONLINE.

SYSTEM STATUS: SAFEGUARD.

THWOOOOM

SYSTEM QUERY: USER STATUS?
USER STATUS: CONFUSED.

USER STATUS: AFRAID.

BOOM BOOM BOOM

SYSTEM STATUS: SAFEGUARD.
SYSTEM STATUS: UPGRADE.

THUMP

USER STATUS: PANIC.
SYSTEM STATUS: SEDATION.

SYSTEM TARGET: ENHANCED.
SYSTEM STATUS: UPGRADE.

SYSTEM STATUS: UPGRADE.
SYSTEM STATUS: UPGRADE.

SYSTEM STATUS: DEFEND.

S.H.I.E.L.D. OBSERVATION STATION:
THE HUB.

WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME, DR. BANNER, A HULKBUSTER SQUAD IS EN ROUTE. IF YOU CAN FIND JUST A MOMENT OF CLARITY, WE'RE PICKING UP A MASSIVE SPIKE FROM A.I.M. ISLAND...

AND I NEED... YOUR...OKAY, NEVER MIND!

RRARRRRRR!

AEEIIIII!

EVACUATE THE OP CENTER.

THIS AREA IS NOW IN FULL LOCKDOWN!

RRARARRR!

A.I.M. ISLAND.

YOU MUST KNOW, SUPERIA-- I FIND NO BLAME IN CURIOSITY. THIS WAS A JOB POORLY DONE.

I KNOW. WE SHOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER EQUIPPED-- EVEN IF THE THING WAS EXPONENTIALLY STRONGER THAN INITIALLY BELIEVED.

STILL, YOU HAVE TO ADMIT...QUITE A SPECIMEN.

HMMM. AND ONE WORTH RETRIEVING.

YOU'RE CERTAIN THIS WILL WORK?

"IT HAS BEFORE, IN A CERTAIN MANNER."

SCIENTIST SUPREME, SIR! THE TRACKING SYSTEM HAS PICKED UP THE ENTITY! IT'S STOPPED...IN...IN PERTH, SIR.

OF COURSE IT HAS. GOING WHERE IT BELIEVES IT IS NEEDED. WHERE THE SIGNAL CALLED IT TO.

AND JUST LOOK WHAT IT HAS DONE TO THESE AVENGERS. WHAT CARNAGE. WHAT POTENTIAL!

BREATHTAKING.

INDEED. TAKE A MOMENT TO FEEL PRIDE AT WHAT YOU BROUGHT INTO THIS WORLD, SUPERIA...

THEN BURY THAT PRIDE DEEP WHERE IT BELONGS.

DOCTORS!

POWER UP THE *AUGER!*

"POWER ON!"

PROCUREMENT DIVISION! ACTIVATE THE TRANSLOCATOR.

YES! ACCESS THE ***BREACH***... AND OPEN THE DOOR TO NOTHING.

"PREPARE YOURSELVES, DOCTORS...

"WE HAVE A WAYWARD CHILD TO CATCH!"

THE ASSEMBLY!

YOUR ONE-STOP NEWS SOURCE FOR ALL THINGS AVENGERS!

The Age of Ultron is over--now is the Age of A.I.! The Singularity has happened, and artificial intelligences have reached the point where they can reproduce and improve themselves without the need for human beings! Somebody's going to have to be the interface between this new society and the whole of mankind! That's where the Vision, Victor Mancha of the Runaways, and Hank Pym come in! Together with S.H.I.E.L.D. specialist Monica Chang and an emancipated Doombot, they're going to patrol the border between man and machine! Sam Humphries and Andre Araujo bring the batteries in **AVENGERS A.I. #1**, the start of an all-new monthly series! (Also available digitally on the Marvel App if you wanna experience the book in true A.I. style!)

Hello, Earth's Mightiest!

About time you had a (SMASHING!) science superheroine! Izzy Kane makes us aspiring (high school) science nerds look cool.

Exospecs on,
Janna S.
Manila, Philippines

Dear Marvel,

I want to start by saying I am an enormous Marvel fan. There's not an entertainment company out there that has produced more comics and products that I've loved more than Marvel. It has always seemed to be the very essence of what fun and adventurous escapism should be to me.

*These days, I don't recognize Marvel as the fun and amazing universe for everyone. What I'm seeing more and more are stories fit for cynical grown-ups with a need to feel that comics are "legitimate" so they don't feel nerdy reading "kid's stuff". I picked up **UNCANNY AVENGERS #3** today and it really was the last straw for me. The art was flawless and beautiful. The story was interesting. But I am sick to death of the adult language in Marvel books. On the back page, you featured fan art from a kid who loved the Avengers. It is so cool that he felt inspired to make art by comic books. However, in this book that kids read, we have super heroes cursing and a crazed mob screaming, "Kill the sons of bitches!" This is totally inappropriate and strikes me as simply trying way, way too hard to be edgy and "hardcore". It doesn't come off as tough and edgy, it comes off as low class and foul. Marvel survived (and thrived) for so many decades under the vilified Comics Code Authority and still managed to consistently produce top notch, quality, fun comics that could be read by anyone. Doing away with the Authority could have, and has on occasion, meant producing stories of meaningful topics previously off-limits. Instead, it seems the pinnacle of not being held accountable means saying "bitch" like a naughty junior high kid. Believe me, I'm no prude. I cuss like a sailor far too often, but I've never once missed seeing the same in a Marvel comic. I also realize that not everybody has the same level of comfort with these inclusions, so it confuses me that it would be included seeing as how it would alienate members of the audience. And I don't believe it adds anything to the story or the level of drama or impact in the slightest, knowing that less adult words can be substituted without sacrificing the feeling of immediacy. Yes, I know in the real world people curse, but in this world there are people lifting tanks over their heads, so gritty realism is a strange concern.*

For my entire life, Marvel comics have been a family affair. Some of the best memories in my life are lying on the living room floor thumbing through comics with my Dad while waiting for Spider-Man and his Amazing Friends to start. I would love to continue that tradition with fresh new work, but I don't feel comfortable sitting down and reading with my kids out of modern Marvel comics. I feel driven to simply commit to collecting work from the past. Which isn't all that bad, because Marvel did always produce the most amazing comic books in the world!

Till we meet again,
Chase Bowman

Thanks for your letter, Chase! First off, let me say that I think it's great both that you want to share your love of Marvel with your kids, and that you scrutinize their entertainment before allowing them to enjoy it. And I'm sorry that you feel that some of what we're doing goes beyond the bounds of what you're comfortable with. What I can tell you is that we strive to be both contemporary and responsible in what we say and do and in how we say and do it. And you're right, that's not always going to be to everybody's tastes. Even during the Comics Code days, there were people who objected to some of the elements in our stories. At the end of the day, it's absolutely your responsibility to determine what is and isn't right for you and your kids, just as it's our responsibility to produce the best, most relevant, most exciting stories that we're able to. And hopefully, we will meet again!

NEXT ISSUE:

AVENGERS TITLES ON SALE

AVENGERS #15
PRELUDE TO INFINITY! ALIEN REFUGEES CRASH TO EARTH!

AVENGERS #16
PRELUDE TO INFINITY! THE AVENGERS BATTLE TO QUIET THE MAD EARTH!

AVENGERS ARENA #12
THE SHOCKING FINALE OF "GAME ON!"

AVENGERS ASSEMBLE #17
THE ENEMY WITHIN! THE MAGNITRON'S GRAND DESIGN IS UNCOVERED!

CAPTAIN MARVEL #14
THE ENEMY WITHIN CONCLUSION! AND A DRAMATIC CHANGE FOR CAPTAIN MARVEL!

NEW AVENGERS #8
PRELUDE TO INFINITY! BLACK BOLT'S SECRETS THREATEN TO TEAR THE INHUMANS APART!

SECRET AVENGERS #6
TRAPPED AND OUTGUNNED IN ENEMY TERRITORY!

SECRET AVENGERS #7
WHAT REALLY HAPPENED ON A.I.M. ISLAND? THE TRUTH REVEALED!

UNCANNY AVENGERS #10
THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF DEATH ARE UNLEASHED!

YOUNG AVENGERS #7
A NEW MEMBER! AND THE KREE KILL KREW!

YOUNG AVENGERS #8
A RACE ACROSS THE MULTIVERSE! AND A SHOCK FOR YOUNG LOKI!

AVENGERS A.I. #1
FROM THE WRECKAGE OF AGE OF ULTRON, A NEW TEAM RISES TO FACE A NEW MENACE!

A + X #10
THE BLACK WIDOW AND FANTOMEX! THE SCARLET WITCH AND DOMINO!

ALSO ON SALE!

MARVEL UNIVERSE AVENGERS: EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES #16

WHAT IF AVX #1-4

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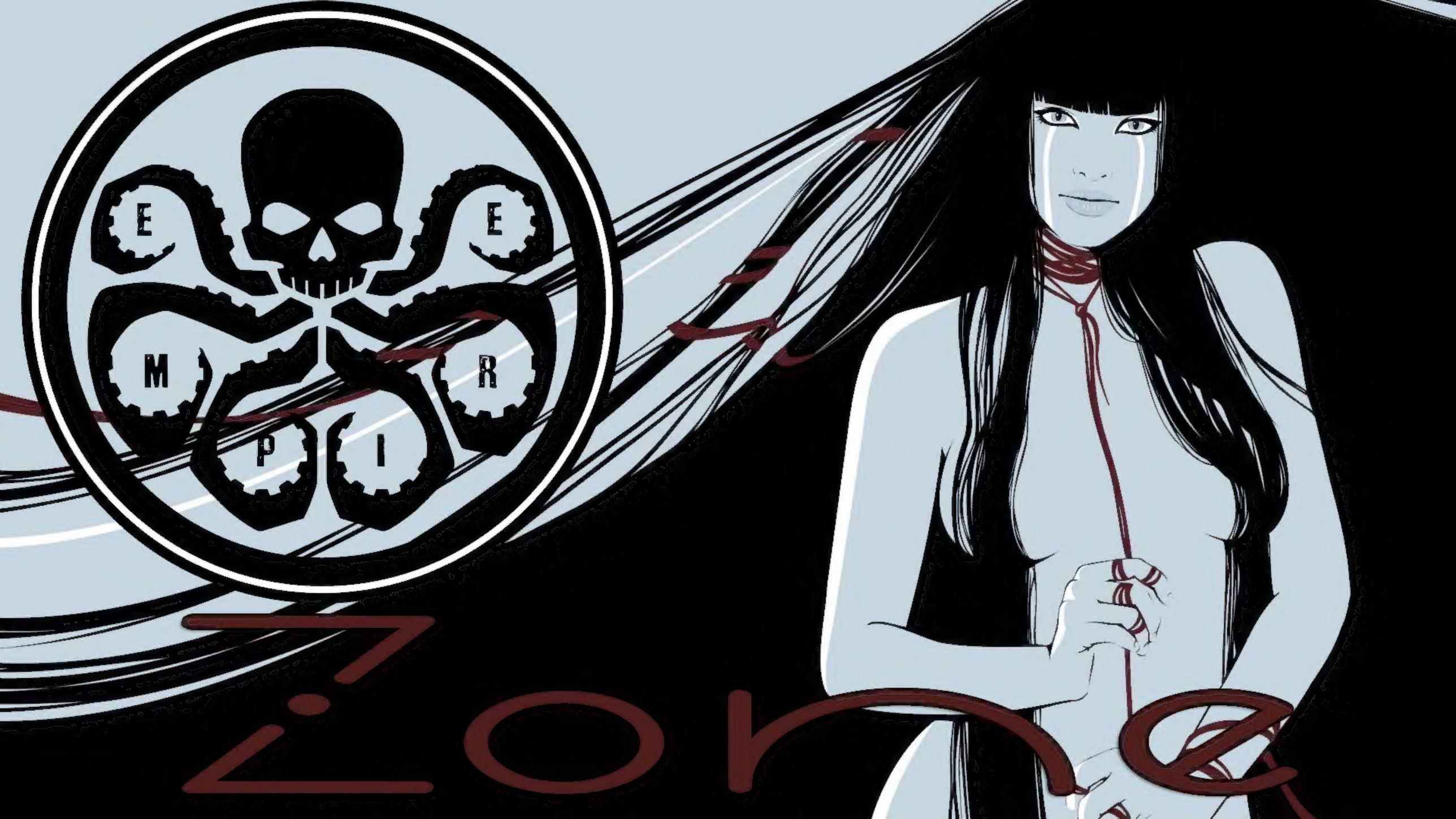
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